



**Unionist**  
**Ulster Unionist Party**

*Doing what's right for Northern Ireland*

# Our Vision for You — **The Voter.**



**Patriotism has to do with keeping  
the country in good heart, the community  
ordered with justice and mercy**

**John Hewitt, from 'Neither an Elegy nor a Manifesto'**

John Hewitt, from 'Neither an Elegy nor a Manifesto', The Selected Poems of John Hewitt, ed. Michael Longley & Frank Ormsby (Blackstaff Press, 2007), reproduced by permission of Blackstaff Press on behalf of the Estate of John Hewitt.

# Politically, the choice is simple. Change, or more of the same.

We all know Northern Ireland isn't working properly. Frustration runs deep. It is an age of uncertainty, of doubt and despair.

It is time for a new era of Belief – in Stormont, its politicians, and their motivation.

An era of political leaders who make good decisions.

An era which unites our people.

My vision is simple - to Make Northern Ireland Work.

I want to end the toxic fear that our great public services are not working.

Our health service cares for you when you are sick. It's our turn to care for the NHS.

Our education system offers the best and worst of experiences. It's not a lottery. We know who is likely to be failed. It is time to fix it.

We do not build half enough houses for our people. We pay lip service to wellbeing issues. We only pretend to be Open for Business.

I see politics differently. When politicians have money to spend, they spend it. When tough decisions need to be made, they make them. When the best thing to do is pass power to others, it is passed.



## In an era of Belief, we can deliver:

- **Mutual respect for each other, respecting both our constitutional status and the tension it can create with the sense of individual identity;**
- **True peace, free from paramilitarism and associated criminality;**
- **Prosperity, measured in financial wealth and your sense of wellbeing.**

That requires a Stormont that makes decisions. That requires parties who put the country above petty party political self-interest. That requires politicians who understand the importance of the greater good.

You know what has been happening at Stormont is not as good as it gets. You deserve – and desire – better. I know I can lead a team that will deliver.

As I complete my fourth year as Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, I believe I have established a reputation for Leadership defined by common sense, the ability to make tough decisions and the capacity to surprise and confound my critics.

I have led the Party into successful elections for local government, the European Parliament and Westminster. Along the way, I have co-operated with others for the greater good.

In the pages that follow, we offer a glimpse of how we would change how Stormont thinks and plans and delivers for you. Please let us know what you think.

Together, we can **Make Northern Ireland Work.**

**Mike Nesbitt**  
Leader, Ulster Unionist Party

# We want to make Northern Ireland work

**Support the party that offers hope, not for those who tell you what to fear.**

That means creating a new Northern Ireland, where you can explore and develop your potential. That means we create the environment where your unique talents and interests are fostered.

- **We want a Health Service that prevents sickness as well as curing it;**
- **We want an education system that doesn't leave any pupil behind;**
- **We want houses that are attractive and affordable homes for our people;**
- **We want an environment fit to be handed over to future generations.**

We want to make our country work for you.

We can do this, and you will know when we are successful, because we will have created one of the most attractive small countries in the world, somewhere people want to live in, return to, visit and invest in.

We will have become a more valued member of the United Kingdom, while maximising the potential for co-operation with our friends and neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.

We understand you require Leadership: Leadership committed to public service; Leadership dedicated to making your life better; Leadership capable of making difficult decisions and clearly showing common sense rules over everything we say and do.

## **You were made big promises in 1998:**

- **Mutual Respect and Trust-Building;**
- **Prosperity through the so-called Peace Dividend;**
- **Better politics than Direct Rule.**

676,966 voted for those outcomes in the 1998 Referendum, which saw a turnout of 81% of the voting population. Nothing since has matched that level of public endorsement. And no wonder. This is not as good as it gets.

You have heard for many years now that things could be a lot worse, that what we have is better than 'the bad old days', that Northern Ireland is 'moving forward', whatever that means. We are told to be realistic. The Ulster Unionist Party disagrees with that passive view. Politicians who tell you to accept what you have are letting you down, and you will soon have the opportunity to replace them.

## **Our commitment is to:**

- **Making decisions in a timely manner;**
- **Delivering positive changes that improve your life;**
- **Reintroducing Common Sense to the heart of the devolved government.**

With your support, we can radically reform how Stormont works, breaking the endless stalemate, deadlock and mutual veto that are the hallmarks of government under the current lead parties.

## **We seek:**

- **Real peace, with an end to paramilitarism and associated criminality, and the removal of the threat of a return to violence;**
- **Stable government, encouraging community cohesion, promoting good relationships with our partners in the United Kingdom and our nearest neighbours;**
- **Prosperity, not only by creating an economy that gives people the space to create wealth, but physical and mental wellbeing, for all our people.**

# As good as it gets

Nine years into the Sinn Féin/DUP controlled Executive, no further proof is required that this is not as good as it gets. There is plenty already!

Two examples: the Social Investment Fund (SIF) was devised by Sinn Féin and the DUP to tackle poverty. £80 million was ring-fenced, in equal measures of £40m each, to tackle deprivation and dereliction. The Programme for Government describes the ambition as to:

- **provide £40 million to address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas through the Social Investment Fund;**
- **invest £40 million to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation and increase community services through the Social Investment Fund.**

In both cases, the Programme for Government makes clear the target during financial year 2014/2015 was **"To have achieved £40million of programme expenditure"**. Yet, as the deadline for spending passed, our joint First Ministers retained £78.5 million in their corporate bank account. Their excuse? It was more complicated than they thought! Another way of looking at it is to suggest they failed to think it through.

Another shocking indictment is the failure to spend the budget that was agreed to create more accessible and affordable childcare. We all know there are many, many parents stuck on benefits, not because they do not want to work, but because of the lack of appropriate childcare facilities. Yet with £12 million ring-fenced to improve the situation, OFMdfM failed to spend the majority of the funding to plan and people suffer lost life opportunities as a result.

Our question is simple: would the electorate tolerate such failure in any other jurisdiction?

Our solution is straightforward: the Ulster Unionist Party will work tirelessly to ensure the funding and resources at our disposal as a devolved government are allocated in a timely and transparent manner.

We will not baulk at the difficult decisions that any government is required to make. The last nine years have been characterised by big, brassy announcements, followed by precious little action, be it SIF, TBUC (Together: Building a United Community) or developing the former prison site at Maze Long Kesh, what the Programme for Government describes as **"a regeneration site of regional significance."** Or the Task Force set up to tackle the appalling rates of suicide in Northern Ireland; at the time of writing, it has not met for nearly a year.

An Ulster Unionist led Executive will reverse that trend, with action over words.

What is needed is profound change: new parties at the heart of government; a cultural change in how we do government; a new mindset that shifts the focus from cycles of inaction followed by crises, to action focused on delivering positive outcomes.



Councillor Carl McClean, Ards & North Down



Our vision is of putting the brakes on what has become a Stormont bureaucracy and return to the mission of developing a devolved democracy. There is an almost exclusive focus at Stormont on inputs, the mechanics of government. We hear on a daily basis from organisations who are deeply frustrated by the way Sinn Féin/DUP do government. They say helping our private sector is a priority, yet we hear constant complaints from our business people about the unnecessary difficulty of tendering for public sector work. It's a £3 Billion annual pot of money. We will recognise the fact that the vast majority of our private sector is composed of micro and small companies, who need us to make the tendering process as simple, short and straightforward as possible.

Community group after community group, set up by individuals committed to helping others, tell us of their frustrations. They need to jump through hoops to get a penny of government money, yet when they prove the need, the funding can last as little as a year, with an unexplained and inexplicable hiatus in renewal. Why?

The current system means these community services take their people to a better place, but like a game of Snakes & Ladders, after taking their users upwards, the funding is cut, and the users slide down the long snake to a worse place than they started - worse, because they now know better can be achieved.

When funding is time-limited, continuity in service delivery and staff retention are major issues for organisations. At times of uncertainty over renewed funding, staff inevitably and naturally seek alternative, more secure employment elsewhere. When specialist workers leave, the Snakes & Ladders effect is at its maximum.

Our Vision is to change how we do government to offer long-term support to those who have proven they can transform our society for the better. Rather than offer 12 months funding to a group who have qualified for support to tackle an on-going issue, we will offer more open-ended funding, dependent on (i) rigorous continuous appraisal of delivery of agreed outcomes and (ii) our right to conclude that the need has been met, at which point we would give adequate notice that funding is to end.

We agree that there must be checks and safeguards concerning the use of public money, but those checks must be appropriate and proportionate, balanced with a clear and central focus on the purpose of government, which is to advance the interests and wellbeing of the people.

Our Vision is focused on the Outcomes of devolved government as measured by your satisfaction with what we do. The current regime has been obsessed with the Inputs.



Councillor Robbie Butler, Lisburn & Castlereagh

# The Ulster Unionists will do things differently

## Context

The 1998 Agreement was designed primarily to offer inclusive politics, encouraging an end to violence that saw so many lost lives and lost life opportunities. Bringing on inclusive politics meant the devolved institutions needed to be large enough to offer a place at the table to as many parties as possible.

### That was then.

Today, our people demand and deserve different and better, with a primary focus on changing how we do our business at Stormont, through effective and efficient government. That transformation is long overdue. It is our vision. It is our promise.

To achieve that, the Ulster Unionist Party supports the planned restructuring of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly for future mandates. Reform requires more than shrinking the size of the institutions. Later in the document, we detail the cultural change in the way we do government, shifting the power base, devolving decision-making closer to the home.

But we would also go further with down-sizing, extending the reform programme to North-South bodies, placing a greater focus of resources and effort on cross-border trade, generating additional wealth that in turn yields the taxes we need to improve our public services.



Jo-Anne Dobson MLA, Upper Bann

## Official Opposition

Good government does not mean everyone has to be part of the government. The Ulster Unionist Party believes the time is right for the introduction of an Official Opposition at Stormont. This would be a bold step towards normal democracy in Northern Ireland, subjecting the parties of government to detailed scrutiny, holding them to account and offering you, the voter, an alternative at election time. You have had nine years of the Sinn Féin/DUP led Executive and you know it is not as good as it gets.

We accept that future devolved governments will need to remain as a coalition between parties representing our two main traditions, but governments try harder when they know they can be replaced.

Delivery will not be achieved by downsizing the institutions alone. There is also an urgent requirement to break away from “vertical” government where power rests in government departments operating independently of each other, in silos. Everyone acknowledges that delivering positive outcomes demands co-operation between departments – or a switch to joined-up “horizontal” government, which cuts through the silo mentality, recognising your needs can only be met if government departments and agencies come together to help.

For example, this decade has seen a huge rise in type-2 diabetes cases, and an explosion of cases is expected over the next decade. It is feared that treating diabetes, and the complications arising from it, has the potential to bankrupt the NHS. Prevention is key to facing this challenge; we have to change our diets and take regular exercise as early as childhood. In other words, the fix does not lie with the Department of Health alone; Education, and the new Department of the Communities must also play their part.

The Ulster Unionists will do things differently. We will switch to joined-up “horizontal” government which recognises the cross-cutting nature of your needs, and will lead the drive to make government work both by re-structuring but also promoting a cultural change whereby mindsets re-focus on outcomes, on why government exists and what it is meant to achieve – positive outcomes for you.

At the last Assembly Elections, we described the issue like this in our 2011 Manifesto:

**“The Programme for Government must be rooted in a commonly agreed agenda about what is good for Northern Ireland and good for the people of Northern Ireland. We must shift away from the pursuit of ‘us-and-them’ agendas and instead focus on building and promoting a post-conflict Northern Ireland.”**

We proposed a Game Changer, a simple switch in the order of business, which can and should bring on a radical improvement in joined up government from the very start of the next Stormont mandate.

Instead of rushing from the polls to allocate the Ministries and Departments on party political strengths, we want to create the space for those entitled to a seat at the Executive to have a discussion first, about the next Programme for Government. This will open the door to reaching a collective agreement on what we are trying to achieve before we know exactly what we have to contribute to make it happen. It will stretch parties more than the current system.

So, Programme for Government first, the allocation of departments second, a simple but game changing reversal of how we have been doing business. The other major parties did not support the proposal in 2011, but they do now, thanks to our perseverance in arguing the merits of the case in the talks processes over the course of the mandate (Haass/O’Sullivan, Stormont House I and Stormont House II/ Fresh Start).

This will bring new-found cohesion to the next Executive. The current one has reached the dizzy heights where two of the four parties of the Executive voted against the self-styled “Fresh Start” agreement, the foundation document for the future at Stormont, yet carry on as partners in government. Where in the world...?

Such is the dysfunctional nature of the Northern Ireland Executive in early 2016. We have a fix.



Councillor Doug Beattie MC, Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon

# Creativity

We will refocus the devolved government on unlocking the creativity of our people. Northern Ireland's track record of high end achievers is one of punching above our weight in terms of internationally renowned figures: Ferguson, Pantridge, Heaney, Best, Gibson, McIlroy; the list is too long to do justice to in this document.

We fear current systems suppress our people's creativity rather than nurturing it. For example, the old 11-Plus Transfer Test asked the wrong question of our children. It was supposed to discover how intelligent a child is, but it made its measurement in the very narrow terms of academic ability in English, Mathematics and Science.

The right question to ask our children is to enquire in what ways are they intelligent and not to discriminate if the answer is that they are best suited to a future that is vocational, technical, artistic or sporting, rather than academic. It is a fact that every child has a spark of ability, creativity and talent and our education system should embrace the glorious and unique combination of talents in every child, not demand they perform to impersonal academic standards like achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs.



In our vision, government will create the environment where all our people have the opportunity to discover what Ken Robinson calls "The Element", the passion that positively transforms someone's life, enhancing an individual's self-worth, quality of life and sense of wellbeing.

To deliver that vision fairly and equitably, that will require the devolved government to empower our seats of higher education to rebalance the trend that is putting an almost exclusive focus on linking academic activity with wealth generation.

In our vision, the search for the next Frank Pantridge will be no more important than the search for the next Seamus Heaney. The next FE McWilliam will be cherished as much as the next Allen McClay.

For the avoidance of doubt, this is not an attack on academic selection and grammar schools. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the need to cherish all our children and their multiple intelligences, by creating an education system that respects and fosters all the talents equally.

**The world is changing faster than ever in our history. We need to evolve a new appreciation of the importance of nurturing human talent along with an understanding of how talent expresses itself differently in every individual.**

**Ken Robinson, Professor of Creativity**

# True Devolution

Power was taken away from Stormont in 1972, when Westminster introduced Direct Rule (Stormont prorogued as a consequence of the civil unrest). Effectively, it did not return for 26 years. It was natural the politicians of 1998 grasped that hard-won opportunity to govern.

Again, that was then ..... in 2016, you deserve - and desire - better than the broken promises and failures that are the hallmark of the Sinn Féin/DUP government of the last nine years.

Our Vision is of a Stormont that provides the Leadership that inspires you to be proud to be from Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes the mature next step is to further devolve power, off "The Hill" at Stormont, through our Councils, into communities, and as close as possible to the family unit, where the chances of effecting real change are at a maximum.

For example, look at the incomplete search for the path to a truly shared future:

Currently, that strategy is called Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC). It is a Sinn Féin/DUP initiative, to the point where the other parties of the then Northern Ireland Executive were not even consulted about it, even though some non-Sinn Féin/DUP departments were given lead roles in its delivery.

**My reading of history convinces me that most bad government has grown out of too much government.**

**John Sharp Williams**

The Ulster Unionist Party believes Stormont should restrict itself to:

- **Defining the vision;**
- **Supporting local communities in delivering on that vision.**

The problem with the current regime is that they write up a 400 page delivery manual, with multiple tick boxes that are pre-requisites to securing funding. But how you deliver a shared future on the Upper Newtownards Road where Stormont is located will be very different from three miles nearer Belfast City Centre on the Lower Newtownards Road; both will differ from Dungiven, or Lisnaskea; and so it goes.

That means the Ulster Unionist Party will trust you, the people, to know best.

We trust that if we properly define the vision we seek, then you, the voter, will know how to make that vision work to your best interests in your local environment. Our role will be to support you.

The Ulster Unionist Party is unwavering in its support for the principle of devolved government for Northern Ireland, based on power-sharing between the two traditional communities and cultures. We are equally clear that the next phase of devolution means devolving power further – into the hands of you, the voter.



Tom Elliott MP, Fermanagh South Tyrone

# What you should demand of your public services

The Ulster Unionist Party understands the critical role public services have to play in creating the environment that will create wealthier, healthier and happier people. That's what we are in politics for.

The point of the spear of those services is the NHS, the jewel in the crown of the United Kingdom's public services. We do not believe it is too much for you to demand a safe, sustainable and quality health service. Unfortunately, as the crisis across our local provision deepens, this is exactly what is most obviously missing from our patient care. That's a political failure and it is not fair on you or the staff who make up our NHS.

Our vision for the National Health Service in Northern Ireland is one where positive experiences and outcomes should more regularly be expected, rather than simply hoped for. We wish to switch the focus from the current "rescue and recovery" system, waiting until you have developed a medical need before intervening, to a preventative focus of avoiding the need for an intervention in the first place.

This will require fundamental change, not in the commitment of staff to help patients, but in the strategic direction, management and oversight of the service. We wish to plan the long-term future. What should the NHS look like in 2021, at the end of the next Assembly mandate as we celebrate Northern

Ireland's centenary? And what about 2050? What is the long-term view, remembering in 35 years' time, Northern Ireland, its population and their health demands will be very different from today.

We have already listened to what you have to say and an overwhelming majority of you have told us you would be happy to see the power to make the big strategic decisions taken away from the politicians.

We wish to explore the potential for radical reform of the management and oversight of the local NHS, and will consult you on what changes will enhance your confidence, including the potential to learn from the relationship between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Policing Board of Northern Ireland. This would see our health services run by a Chief Executive and senior management team, overseen by a Board populated by politicians, medical experts and representatives of civic society. The board would hold the NHS management to account, but the Chief Executive would be operationally independent.

As with all our public services, we seek imaginative work-arounds to the political paralysis that stifles decision-making, degrades the quality of service and undermines the confidence of service providers and users alike.



Adrian Cochrane-Watson MLA, South Antrim  
with Danny Kinahan MP, South Antrim

# Vision

Northern Ireland needs a vision: something that will give everyone a clear idea of where we are going.

As stated, the Ulster Unionist vision is to Make Northern Ireland Work, with clearly articulated measures of success.

To get there, we will develop Action Plans to create a picture of Northern Ireland in its centenary year of 2021, and again in 2050.

A vision for our Infrastructure, hard and soft, will be central to our thinking. Hard infrastructure covers our ports and airports, roads and railways, energy supply and electronic telecommunications and networks, water and sewerage, housing, hospitals and schools. Soft infrastructure covers our state institutions and organisations, such as the National Health Service of Northern Ireland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the educational system, amongst others.

We can only achieve world class status with long term visions, achieved through Action Plans that have clear, time bound, measurable steps that offer our people the opportunity to monitor progress and take confidence in their devolved institutions and their ability to deliver.

Our statement of beliefs is simply stated:

## The Ulster Unionist Credo

**Country First  
Party Second  
The interests of the  
people must be our  
primary concern,  
not what is best  
for the Party.**

There was a time when Northern Ireland was a net financial contributor to HM Treasury. We were global economic players, renowned for textile production, the largest rope works in the world and, of course, the Belfast shipyard, the Silicon Valley of its day.

In our Vision, we strive to again be independent of a financial subsidy from London. We understand we may never get there but the Ulster Unionist Party believes the effort alone will be transformational and that you, the Voter, agree with our determination to do better than the Sinn Féin/DUP Begging Bowl approach to government.

### In our Vision, we will offer you:

- **Leadership that inspires and unites;**
- **Further devolution that gives you a greater say in how to enhance your quality of life and wellbeing;**
- **Space to give our children the opportunity to unite in common purpose as they wish.**

The sincerity of a Party's vision can be measured by its record in power. In negotiations before the last two General Elections, the DUP demanded more money for their co-operation in a new Government, most recently promising the electorate they would extract a price for their support of a minority national government, something that did not come to pass.

As confident, committed Unionists, our vision of the relationship between Northern Ireland and Great Britain amounts to much, much more than viewing London as a dispenser of funds, a Super-ATM to be tapped into when the going gets the slightest bit rough.

In our vision, London will no longer view us as the problem child of the United Kingdom.

# Your Wellbeing



The Ulster Unionist Party will place the wellbeing of our people at the heart of how we do government.

As a Party, we have led the drive for recognition of Northern Ireland's appalling record of poor mental health and wellbeing. Per capita, Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of poor mental health in the world, and part of the reason is that it is a legacy issue from our Troubles. There is a clear statistical overlap between the geographic hotspots where the bombs and shootings were most frequent and a contemporary map of mental health issues, measured in drug and alcohol abuse and the worst suicides rates in Europe, resulting in more lives lost to suicide since 1998 than in the whole of the Troubles.

To the extent mental health is a legacy issue, it is not covered by the Barnett Formula. Nor by extension, would there be consequential for Scotland or Wales if HM Government addressed the problem through additional, ring-fenced or "hypothecated" funding. We have already secured the support of the Labour Party for additional support. We have taken the case directly to the Prime Minister and will continue to press the argument.

Financial prosperity is important and the Ulster Unionist Party has always promoted the need to close the prosperity gap between our people and citizens of Great Britain. Devolving the power to set our own rate of Corporation Tax was an Ulster Unionist idea and we stand by the principle, while regretting how Sinn Féin/DUP have wasted so much time in securing a Date and Rate; this has held back thousands of our people who yearn for the opportunity for a worthwhile job and a fulfilling life. We will return to financial prosperity later in this document.

While measurements such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA) are important measures of the success or otherwise of government, the Ulster Unionist Party will explore wellbeing measures as favoured by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Carnegie Trust who have already been engaged in wellbeing measures in Northern Ireland.

Wellbeing measures include:

- **Life satisfaction;**
- **Self-reported health;**
- **Satisfaction with family life;**
- **Satisfaction with social life;**
- **Satisfaction with the devolved government.**

**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**

**Declaration of Independence, USA**

# Financial Prosperity

We want healthier and happier people, but we want wealthier people as well.

It is commonly said that Northern Ireland is too poor for Dublin to afford us. This is reflected in recent polls on Irish Unification conducted in the Republic and Northern Ireland. But this point, often seized upon by the DUP, belies their claims that economically, things are not so bad. On the contrary, Stormont has failed to generate the financial prosperity required to close the gap with Great Britain and leaves our citizens as among the least well off in the United Kingdom.

Using per capita GVA (Gross Value Added) as a measure of living standards, the Northern Ireland Executive calculate you lag behind your counterparts in Great Britain by around 75 to 80 percent of the UK average. Interestingly, the gap was narrowest, at 83.7%, in 2007, the very year Sinn Féin and the DUP took over. Since then gaps have grown.

The level of co-operation between the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland is at an all-time high. The UK exports more than £1.5 billion per month to the Republic, our fifth largest export destination. This protects some 200,000 jobs in the UK, while the UK remains the Republic's single largest trading partner. Northern Ireland exported £2.2 billion to the Republic in 2013, again supporting thousands of jobs.

The axis of East-West relationships is now firmly between London and Dublin directly, not via Belfast. It is also a very positive relationship, as evidenced by the Queen's visit to the Republic in 2011, and the reciprocal state visit of President Michael D Higgins to Great Britain in 2014, not to mention the UK's loan of £7 billion during the financial crisis in Dublin.

We want Stormont to work to convince both London and Dublin that Northern Ireland has much to offer as relationships between our two great countries mature and develop. Sadly, it is clear from the recent political talks processes (Haass, Stormont house I, Stormont house II/Fresh Start) that Northern Ireland is seen by both jurisdictions as something of a political and economic liability.

Our vision for Northern Ireland is of a proud people who seek the opportunity to get back to work and end our over-reliance on others. While an annual subvention is likely to be required for the foreseeable future, our aim will be to generate more of our own wealth and increase the prosperity of our people.



# Identity



In our Vision, we will recognise the fundamental importance of your sense of identity.

Our Vision is for all our people. It will not be limited by the old, binary notions that try to dictate you must be labelled Orange or Green, Unionist or Nationalist, Protestant or Catholic. Most people's identity is much more complex than that. If we accept few of us are born with pure ancestral lines, be it Gael or Briton, we open new possibilities for finding common ground and easing our path to a shared future.

In the search for a united way forward for all our people, we should not forget we have a shared past as our guiding light – a shared past of service and sacrifice, which we remember in this Centenary Year of the Battle of the Somme. The exploits of the 36th Ulster Division and the 16th Irish Division must both be taught.

Identity must no longer be conflated with sovereignty. The 1998 Agreement stated two distinct facts: first, it is your right to describe your identity as you see fit. It is equally valid to be British, Irish, Northern Irish or other. The second fact relates to sovereignty; Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom.

# Northern Ireland Today

The 1998 Agreement enshrined the principle of consent. It was accepted there could be no constitutional change in the status of Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of the electorate in Northern Ireland. At the same time the Republic of Ireland dropped its offensive claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland.

With this constitutional stability, the last 18 years should have been used to foster common cause among our people, transcending the traditional religious divide. Under the stewardship of the two parties currently leading our devolved government, the story is of lost opportunities.

The old ways of conflict, including the presence of paramilitary gangs with influence and access to weaponry, have not disappeared as they should have.

Respect for the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is lacking. A large section of nationalist political representation, on both sides of the border, cannot bring themselves to even say the words 'Northern Ireland'. So much for mutual respect! The term equality has been contaminated by the revelation that Republican leaders consider it the Trojan Horse that will trap unionists, rather than deliver a new society of equals.

The Ulster Unionist Party wants to move politics on, to talk about wealth creation and prosperity; to concentrate on the issues that affect you in your everyday life, but to do so in an environment where we all respect both Northern Ireland's constitutional status and the individual identity of our citizens, demonstrating fairness, tolerance and respect for each other.

To do that, we need stability. We need respect for cultural differences; we do not need constant agitation and aggression against all things British. The creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect would make accommodations for the relatively few disputes around parading much more likely.

# Constitutional Change

There is absolutely no evidence that a significant proportion of voters support change, never mind the majority required to make it happen. This is important, because we ensured the law demands proof that there is an appetite for change.

The Northern Ireland Act 1998 is the law. Its Schedule 2 states:

**"... the Secretary of State shall exercise the power under paragraph 1 (holding a so-called "Border Poll") if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland."**

So, even if the Secretary of State were to attempt to call a referendum or "Border Poll", this would inevitably lead to a Judicial Review of that decision.

There are new challenges to the future of the United Kingdom. Scotland's referendum result was close and we note that in achieving that referendum, the Scottish Nationalist Party did more for independence from London without a single bomb or bullet than Irish Republicanism achieved through our bloody Troubles.

Next comes the UK referendum on continued membership of the European Union, with the possibility the UK will vote to leave, but Scotland votes to stay in. The UK could yet break up in this generation. The Ulster Unionist Party recognizes the danger. Reducing the economic deficit with London is not only good for our economy, it is good for our future in the United Kingdom.

While ever-vigilant to the shifting nature of the threats to the Union, the Ulster Unionist Party's vision of good government sees a clear focus on the problems that affect us all on a daily basis: health, housing, education, the economy and the rest.



Lord Empey, Party Chairman with Danny Kinahan



Sky Aughey, Young Unionist

# Vision 2021 / 2050

As we approach Northern Ireland's Centenary, we have visions and will design delivery plans to ensure that:

- **By 2021, we have achieved the cultural change in our soft infrastructure that unites all our citizens in common purpose and humanity; meaning**
- **By 2050, we have created the hard infrastructure that helps make us the best we can be, one of the most attractive small countries in the world, a more valued member of the United Kingdom, continuing to maximise co-operation with our friends and neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.**

By 2050, Northern Ireland will be very different: our population could rise to 2.5 million; our people will live longer, be healthier, and we will be a much more diverse society. Our climate will change, becoming warmer and wetter, meaning in some senses we will be able to significantly expand our agricultural sector. In what is likely to be an increasingly unstable 21st century, our secure and peaceful environment will make us a highly attractive place to invest, research and live.

By 2050, our hard infrastructure will need replaced, renewed or upgraded. If we start making the right, strategic decisions now, we can ensure the massive changes that lie ahead are opportunities, not challenges or threats.

Without investment in infrastructure, we will not be able to maximise our advantages; roads, rail, airports, power stations and grids all have 30+ years life spans, but many of these are already reaching the ends of their lives. We need to invest, province wide, in cost effective energy smart grids, latest generation information networks, an integrated road/rail transport system, airlinks, affordable logistics systems, that support our economy and, where it makes sense, fully integrating our communication systems across all these Islands.



## Our 2050 vision will focus on:

- **Creating a health system that utilises cutting edge preventative care and screening to keep our people fit, able, and productive;**
- **Embedding wellbeing as the key measure of successful government;**
- **Building on the excellence of our primary education system and parts of our secondary education system to producing a seamless and integrated approach to delivering the best outcomes for our young people;**
- **Reacting to the fact people will live and work for longer by developing continuous education and an 'upskilling and reskilling' process that trains and develops our workers;**
- **Investing in a higher education system that produces highly skilled graduates and workers;**
- **Helping business, especially manufacturing, agribusiness, tourism, the creative industries, and the service sectors by creating a climate that embraces entrepreneurs;**
- **Becoming the 'start up' region of the United Kingdom;**
- **Innovation, health and education, to secure our future.**

With the right decisions made in a timely fashion, we can transform our relationship with London from one of broad financial dependency to one of achievable financial independence, creating a Northern Ireland that is peaceful, prosperous, innovative, welcoming, stable and secure; the leading place in the United Kingdom to do research, build that business, raise that family, at ease with itself and with its neighbours, working co-operatively, integrating when it is appropriate, always looking after its own best interests.

# Conclusion

The Ulster Unionist Party believes in devolution, but not as an end in itself. There is little benefit to the people of Northern Ireland if power is transferred from Westminster to Stormont, if it is retained by those in the current, cosy partnership in Stormont Castle. Our vision is to devolve power further to the people; to trust you to know what you need to enjoy healthier, wealthier and happier lives.

We believe you desire – and deserve – better and the key that unlocks the door to that better place is Leadership. Some parties seek power for its own sake, to have and to hold. The Ulster Unionist Party seeks the responsibility that comes with power, so we can make timely decisions, no matter how tough those decisions may be.

This journey we are all on is about creating a better society, where we are comfortable in who we are and with our chances in life. We believe we will get there. The question is “when?”

**That leaves you, the Voter, with the ultimate choice. Do you want Change, or More of the Same?**







Ulster Unionist Party

Strandtown Hall

2-4 Belmont Road

Belfast

BT4 2AN

Tel: 02890 474630

[www.uup.org](http://www.uup.org)